

Mr. B. Crosby Esq

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OF THE
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY, BOSTON.

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY, BOSTON.

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TO THE

Members and Friends of the American Tract Society IN NEW ENGLAND.

It is known to you that public attention has been specially drawn of late to the Volumes published by the American Tract Society in New York. The manner in which some of these volumes are accommodated to the principles of union between different evangelical denominations constituting the Society, has been and is still a subject of earnest discussion.

Having directed our attention in a particular manner to the principles and operations of the Society, in view of recent communications, and a delegation from our number having conferred with the Committee at New York with regard to its general interests, we feel that it may not be unacceptable to the members and friends of the Tract Society in New England, if we state to them some of the results of our inquiries and deliberations.

It appears that in May, 1825, a Convention of delegates from Tract Societies throughout the country was held at New York, at which the present constitution of the Society was adopted, and on the following day the Society was organized with public religious exercises, and the corner stone of the present Tract Society's house was laid.

Before commencing their operations, the Executive Committee issued an address to the Christian public, contained in

Tract No. 1, in which they specify the following doctrines of the gospel as those in which the founders and members agree, and constituting the basis of their present union, viz: "*Man's native sinfulness; the purity and obligation of the law of God; the true and proper divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; the necessity and reality of his atonement and sacrifice; the efficiency of the Holy Spirit in the work of renovation; the free and full offers of the Gospel, and the duty of men to accept it; the necessity of personal holiness; and an everlasting state of rewards and punishments beyond the grave.*"

The operations of the Society began by issuing a series of Tracts, and Children's Tracts; but attention had already been directed to the issuing of volumes, in imitation of the Parent Religious Tract Society in London. In the third year of the Society, it entered on the publication of books, by stereotyping Doddridge's 'Rise and Progress;' and this was soon followed by the 'Saints' Rest,' 'Call to the Unconverted,' and kindred works. In pursuance of this plan the Society has been engaged for seventeen years in publishing religious books, and for twenty years in publishing tracts.

Thirteen religious denominations are represented in the Society, and six in the Committee of Publication. This Committee consists of Rev. Dr. Milnor of the Episcopal, Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander and Rev. Dr. McAuley of the two branches of the Presbyterian, Rev. Dr. Knox of the Reformed Dutch, Rev. Dr. Justin Edwards of the Congregational, and Rev. Mr. Sommers of the Baptist church.

When it is proposed to print a book or tract, the book or manuscript is sent to each of the members of this Committee residing in New York, who examines it by himself as to its evangelical character, and having regard, also, to the views of the denomination which he represents in the Society. The book, having thus passed

through the hands of the several members of the Committee, is finally considered and voted upon in a meeting of the Committee, and then, if unanimously adopted, is sent to the non-resident members for their concurrence. Works requiring much revision are usually committed to one member of the Committee, with one of the Secretaries, to prepare them for publication.

So far as we have ascertained, no objections have been expressed against the principle of union upon which the Society is founded, but on the contrary, some who have had difficulties with regard to the alteration of books by the Publishing Committee, have expressed themselves strongly in favor of this union. In the remarks which we shall make upon this part of the subject therefore, we do not feel ourselves to be in controversy with any. Our object in dwelling upon it is to call the attention of the Christian public renewedly and more fully to the peculiar advantages for doing good which this Society as a union of evangelical Christians enjoys.

The simple object of the Society is to publish the great and glorious truths of evangelical religion by means of books and tracts. No one can read the works which it has issued without feeling that, throughout, they magnify the riches of atoning blood and the power of the Holy Ghost, and vindicate all the distinguishing truths of experimental religion. While paragraphs and sentences and expressions relating to points on which evangelical Christians differ, are either changed as to their controversial aspect, or omitted, we know of no volume published by the Society which is in any sense diluted as to evangelical sentiment. We do not speak the whole truth when we say merely this. We are sure that the same number of volumes cannot be found in our tongue better suited to teach men those distinctive truths of religion which are essential to salvation. We venture to say that no Christian of any evangelical denomination can read these publications,

and feel that a single practical truth of experimental religion is omitted or weakened. Allusions to points of order and to Christian ordinances in which Christians differ, and passages which would excite controversial feelings amongst evangelical believers, are changed, or omitted, but the books are as eminently evangelical and as full of high toned pious sentiment, as before. When a reader is presented with a list of changes and omissions in a particular work, it is to be remembered that a book that professes as its great object to teach essential truth, must be judged of not by what is left out, but by what is left in. We are liable to receive incorrect impressions from reading disconnected passages of a book which have been omitted or changed, without inquiring into their relations to the work as a whole. We believe that no real Christian, of any name or creed, who reads these volumes, will fail to find in them whatever his spiritual taste demands.

We propose now, in the first place, to speak of the advantages which a Society composed of various denominations of evangelical Christians enjoys in publishing such books and tracts.

The great argument in favor of the union of different evangelical denominations in this work is, that hundreds of thousands in our country are reached by these books and are taught the way of salvation, who, on the plan of denominational effort, would either not be reached, or would have their denominational prejudices excited. The state of society in many parts of our country shows how important it is that the way of salvation should be made known, as it may be, to hundreds of thousands at this juncture, without awakening sectarian jealousy.

We are told by those who, as agents of this Society, have explored and surveyed the country for the purpose of promoting the circulation of these books, that there is among vast masses in our land a deplorable ignorance of the plan of salvation. Not far from one half of the peo-

ple of the entire country are without evangelical instruction from the pulpit, and many thousands receive it from the lips of a ministry somewhat secular and but imperfectly educated. About one third of the families out of New England which have been visited by the agents of this Society, are destitute of religious books except the Bible and a hymn book, and not far from one sixth of the families in the more distant States have not the word of God. Nine out of ten of all these families in all probability would remain for years without religious reading if the books were not brought to their doors.

So far as the various classes in many parts of the country know any thing of religion, it is a question whether they are not better informed respecting points of difference among denominations, than upon vital points of saving truth. They need more instruction about the way to be saved, such as the books of this Society contain.

Each of the several denominations composing this Society should consider, that though in thus uniting they do not publish to these masses their denominational peculiarities, and though it may be that some of them pay a disproportionate part of the money which sustains this united effort, they, by this means, induce other denominations to forego, in this particular effort, an attempt to urge their peculiar views upon the uninstructed millions. If one denomination paid ninety-nine dollars out of every hundred for this purpose, are they not, as Christians, repaid by having the other denominations willing to sanction such books as are sent forth through this institution, instead of insisting on the separate circulation of sectarian books amongst the masses of our population.

This Society interferes with no denominational board which any may see fit to form; but it is worthy of consideration whether denominational institutions have not generally directed their efforts, in our land, to communities already evangelized.

Hundreds of ministers of various denominations whose circumstances oblige them at present to perform manual labor for a large part of their support, and those who never had much, if any, theological instruction, have received from the hands of the book agents of this Society more religious volumes than previously composed their libraries; and they have co-operated with these agents in the effort to supply their people and the population around them with these volumes.

The population of many of our States is composed of families from the north and south, the old world and the new, with every shade of religious opinion. Of one hundred and fifty families in a given district, twenty may be Methodists, twelve Baptists, ten Presbyterians, two Congregationalists, one Episcopalian, one Reformed Dutch, three German Reformed, four Lutherans—all evangelical; while ten are Campbellites, six Universalists, eight "New Lights," three Christians, seven Mormons, ten Infidels, and fifteen Roman Catholics. An agent of the American Tract Society will combine the interests which are evangelical in harmonious effort for the supply of all the families of their respective denominations, and in united effort for those who are in error or neglected.

The German population in this country, it is well known, is rapidly increasing, and is to be an important element in forming our national character. It is known, too, that the practical religious literature in their language is deficient. But this Society has the undivided confidence of all the evangelical denominations among them, and is supplying them with an evangelical literature in their own tongue. No denominational society could accomplish this work, by reason of the strong denominational prejudices which pervade the numerous divisions and subdivisions into which the Germans are themselves divided.

Now suppose that a proposition should be made to form a denominational society to supply the destitute population in our land with religious books. Take the Presbyterians and Congregationalists for an illustration, and suppose that they should withdraw, for this purpose, from the Tract Society. In the first place, how would they agree as to their views of church government, and what success would they have in accommodating standard religious works to their purpose as to points of church polity? If they could succeed here, what one theological school would unite and harmonize all the views which some of them would, in their turn, think it necessary to present? And would the advocates of various projects and measures claim nothing, or contest nothing? The result, probably, would be utter failure, or, the formation of a general Institution like the American Tract Society.

But suppose that the new scheme should succeed. Would there not be a corresponding effort of antagonist sects to follow up and contest every inch of ground?

Let us imagine what a New England Congregationalist, for example, who should object to the principles of this Society, might say in reply to all this. He might say, 'I am strongly attached to the faith of my Puritan ancestors, confirmed, as it has been, by their sacrifices and sufferings. Must I say nothing in the books of the Tract Society, about certain points of belief which to me are precious? The puritans in England chose to be ejected from their pulpits rather than be debarred from teaching and preaching in all respects as they thought the Bible required of them. To enjoy the ordinances of the gospel, as they regarded them, unmolested, they brought a church and ministry to this wilderness. Ought they to have remained at home, sacrificing their 'denominational peculiarities' for the sake of Christian union? Am I faithful to their doctrines and institutions if I do not insist on spreading them by every means in my power?'

The other denominations composing the Society might present the argument on their side against union in this institution, with at least as much feeling as the Congregationalist. They might say, 'We love what we believe is taught in the Scriptures as much as you can do. It is as great a sacrifice for us not to publish certain things as for you. Let us agree to omit them, however, in certain publications, that we may together, and with a peculiar advantage, by these books, make known Christ and him crucified.'

Suppose that one of them, the Congregationalist, for example, should say, 'I am bound to make New England Congregationalism in its doctrines and ordinances universal, if I can, in our Western country.' The members of the other denominations might answer, 'We also feel bound to spread our denominational peculiarities co-extensively with the growing population of our country. We shall vie with you in our Home Missionary operations, and, if we can, shall induce the people of the west and southwest to adopt our denominational views and order. But the question is, whether there be not a common service which we can render to Christ and the souls of men with greater advantage by union in the Tract Society than by separate efforts in that cause?'

We think the question ought to be distinctly borne in mind whether the omission of denominational peculiarities in the publications of the Tract Society is, in fact or in its tendency, a denial, in any respect, of the faith. In coming into this union in the Tract Society, the various denominations do not yield their belief in certain points; but, for what they count a great and common good, they agree, in certain books, not to mention their peculiarities of doctrine and order. While nothing could induce them to abjure these things, they say of each of them, with a view to one special purpose, as the Saviour said of his own life, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Now is it more of an injury than

a benefit to Christian faith and to the best interests of men to omit any mention of these peculiarities in this class of books? This is a question which, in being answered by each one for himself, will decide the minds of many with regard to the principles on which the Tract Society is formed and proceeds.

The influence which this Society exerts in creating among hundreds of thousands a taste for good reading must not be overlooked. Some booksellers, with much sagacity, are following with their agents in the wake of the colporteurs, as commerce follows Christian missions. The Tract Society is creating a market for good books wherever its agents penetrate. It is doing more in this way for the literary and theological character of our country than can be computed. The works of Baxter, Bunyan, Owen, President Edwards, Andrew Fuller, and Bishop Hall cannot be widely circulated and read, without raising the intellectual as well as moral character of the people, and creating an increased demand for sound religious publications.

In illustration of the usefulness of this plan of union, we may ask those Christians in our towns and cities who are engaged in the benevolent and useful work of Tract distribution, what they would do if there were no such Society as this to furnish the distributors of all evangelical denominations with books and tracts which they can all join to circulate? What confusion would ensue in your efforts if each denomination in your town or city should try to overspread the place with denominational publications? What bitterness and conflicts, what waste of time and labor, if the efforts of each denomination for its own private good were substituted for the distribution of these publications in which all agree. As the moon puts her hands about the sea, and makes it swell in regular tides, so this Society, in some measure, keeps sectarian zeal from flooding the habitations of men with its irregular and desolating surge.

It is of great importance that all evangelical Christians in our country should be united at the present day in resisting the tide of Romanism. The American Tract Society may be one of the means employed by the Spirit of God to keep Christians of the several sects from flying apart at this hour of darkness and peril, and from turning those weapons against each other which ought to point one way against a common foe. This Institution affords a striking illustration of Protestant unity, thus refuting the stale reproach that there is no such unity ; while it happily combines the efforts of all to save the deluded votaries of the Man of Sin.

Such considerations as these, (and the illustrations might be greatly extended,) satisfy the Committee that the American Tract Society occupies a most important place amongst the instrumentalities for the conversion of men. We think that the Christian community will unite, in view of such considerations, to sustain and cheer the Society in its noble enterprise.

Our argument in favor of the union of denominations in the Tract Society is not drawn from the desirableness of making them one in all respects, but it refers to a particular good which they can accomplish by uniting in this instance and for this particular object. Neither do we mean to intimate that our whole practical religious literature should be furnished by such an institution as this, which shall withhold every book which all sects cannot agree to publish. We only say that there are books of inestimable value which all evangelical denominations may, with a peculiar advantage, unite to circulate in our country at the present time. Genius, and taste, and zeal for peculiar forms and denominational opinions, will not be wanting to furnish the land with other books suited to every good and useful purpose. Shall we not join, in this Society, to promote a special object which can be accomplished by our union with extraordinary advantage to the souls of men, while we leave the way open for any to do good also in such other methods as they may choose.

We come now, in the second place, to speak more directly with regard to the principle and practice of accommodating books to the great object thus contemplated by the Society.

It would be a misfortune if this Society should present itself to any mind with its incidental arrangement of revising books in undue prominence. The revision of books is not the object for which the Society exists. It seeks to make known salvation by Christ through books and tracts to the largest possible number of souls in our land. When this can be promoted by issuing books which require no alteration, all will agree that this, for every reason, should be done; and such has been the practice of the Publishing Committee. But, when a book can, in the view of the Committee, promote the great object for which it was written more effectually in the hands of the Society by certain changes or omissions, they feel that it is their duty to make them, and the book being thus prepared, as they think, in the very best way to teach the greatest number of minds the truths necessary to salvation, they send it broadcast over the land.

We can conceive of alterations of such a nature and to such an extent which a book would require before it could be adopted by the Publishing Committee, that we should doubt the propriety of its being published by them. How far it may be judicious to alter a work for the sake of adopting it, they must be left to judge, and their judgment in the case will of course be a fair subject for examination. We know it to be a fact that books containing a very considerable portion of denominational sentiments have from the first been regarded as inappropriate to the use of the Society. At the same time, it must be evident to all, that it is difficult to define precisely how far changes in books may consistently be made. The question must probably be decided for each book by itself, and upon the merits of the book.

It is right and fair that each book which is altered by the Publishing Committee, should apprise the reader of the fact. While it would be injudicious to make such a notice obtrusive, and while a desire to manifest conscientiousness may be so expressed as to defeat its own good intentions, it is indispensable that every book which is altered should not be in any danger of passing as the exact production of the author. If the present notices in any of the books are not sufficient, it will be easy to make them so. The Publishing Committee have assured us that every book which is altered shall contain such a notice, informing the reader of the nature of the alterations in it, without relying on his supposed knowledge of the Society's plan of publications to suggest to him that alterations may have been made. They have also expressed their intention to prefix such a notice to all the future issues of their present publications which may require it. It will then be understood, that those who wish for the works in their original form must look elsewhere for them than to this Society, and those who are willing to circulate or receive books which, while they have been revised by the Publishing Committee for more extensive circulation, are still substantially as they were written, may avail themselves of the privilege.

We are satisfied that the Publishing Committee will avail themselves of any light which recent discussions and further experience, and the known wishes of their constituents, may afford, and that they will make their publications, in all respects, increasingly acceptable and useful. But it should be borne in mind that the Society was not instituted to furnish the literary man or the theologian with editions of books whose merit should consist in their being entire original works, but to provide books and tracts which all the denominations composing the Society could unite to circulate. In all cases, the Publishing Committee hold themselves responsible that the works which they alter are not made false to history or revela-

tion. If in any instance they inadvertently make them so, it should be pointed out by any one who should discover it, and the Publishing Committee will, of course, correct their error. But, if they do not falsify the facts of history or the sentiments of the author, in their alterations, and if sufficient notice is given to the reader that the book is altered, they believe that, in discreetly abridging a work, or in omitting allusions to the ordinances and order by which evangelical Christians are distinguished, they do no injustice to any one, and at the same time, promote the general object for which the book was written.

This being understood, we presume that the several denominations composing the Society will require of the Publishing Committee that they still pursue substantially their present plan of publication, the fruit of which is already seen in the literary and religious benefit of multitudes who would not have been reached by evangelical books in any other way.

The Publishing Committee inform us that their rule is, to consult living authors before adopting or publishing their works and to this rule they have adhered, so far as they can remember, with but a single exception, in the case of D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation, which they were anxious to publish, as they did, at the urgent request of friends in different parts of the country, while the book was at the height of its popularity.

In a recent letter to a friend in this country, we learn that this author says, that,

In order to obviate all difficulty in relation to the future publication of his History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century, by the American Tract Society, he will endeavor to put the work in such a form that it will be possible for the Society to issue it without censure from any quarter. He states that he will revise the omissions made and see which of them he can adopt. He will also prepare an appropriate Preface for this New Edition. By some slight additions he deems it possible to remove some of the obstacles which have been in the way of the Society's publishing the work as it was originally written.

In a note to the Society dated, Geneva, Nov. 11, 1844, Dr. D'Aubigne also says,

I render thanks to God that he has permitted me to be a co-laborer with a Society so excellent as yours; and of the fruits with which he has deigned to crown my humble endeavors, there is none which is more precious to me, than the thought of spreading abroad the great truths and the great things of God among the destitute settlements of your Great Valley, and other obscure and neglected portions of your country. But oh, gentlemen, beseech the Lord, and call on your agents to pray, that he will not permit these volumes to go *alone* through your destitute settlements, but that he will accompany each by his Holy Spirit.

In answer to inquiries, the Executive Committee have informed us, that from all which they have heard and observed respecting their system of Colportage, they are entirely satisfied that it is accomplishing very great good, and that no information has come to their knowledge which leads them to doubt that the system is receiving the increased confidence and co-operation of the Christian ministry.

We cherish the highest opinion of the purity of motives, the Christian zeal and faithfulness, the simplicity and earnestness of pious feeling which appear to characterize the respected men who are intrusted with the management of the Society at New York. We cannot with too much assurance commend them to the confidence and gratitude of the Christian public, in their arduous and useful toils. Calling to mind how faithfully and for how long a time they have been employed in publishing the simple truths of the Gospel, in their books and tracts, we think that they may appropriately say, "Having therefore obtained help of God, we continue unto this day, saying none other things than those which Moses and the prophets did say should come."

Voted unanimously by the Executive Committee.

JOHN TAPPAN, *Chairman.*

SETH BLISS, *Secretary.*

Boston, February 6, 1845.

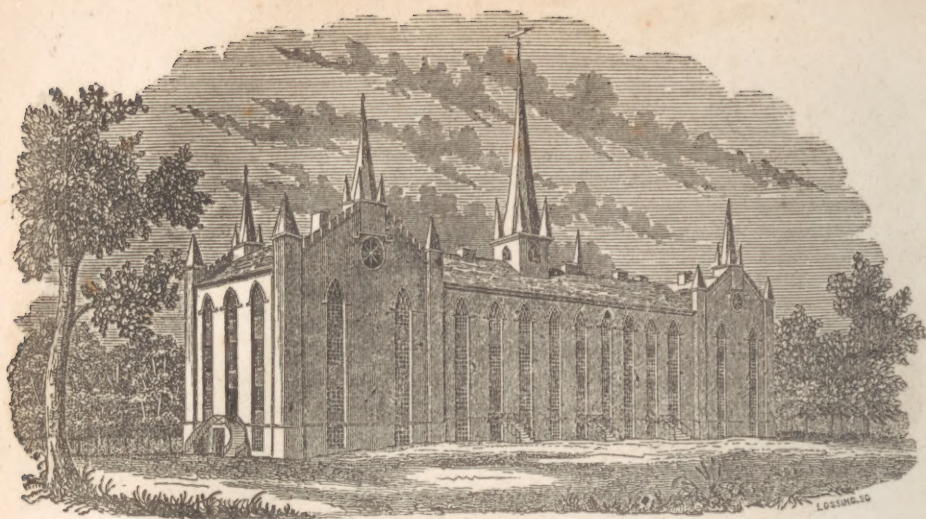
KENYON COLLEGE

DANVERS, MASS.



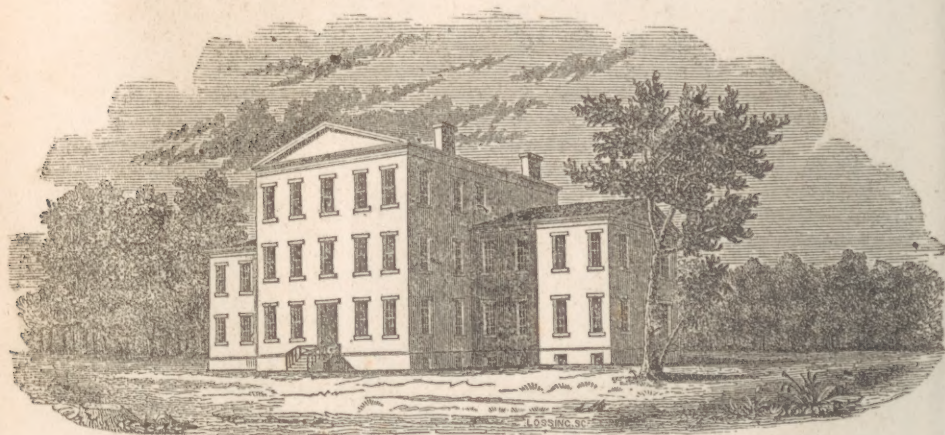
MILNOR HALL

THE HOUSE FOR THE STUDENTS OF KENYON COLLEGE



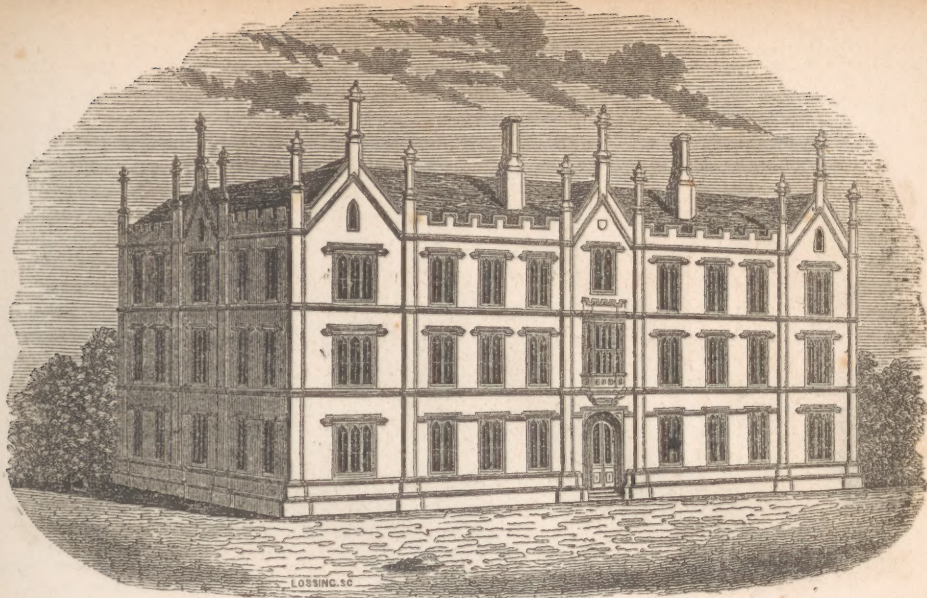
KENYON COLLEGE,
GAMBIER, OHIO.

This edifice is of stone, and 190 feet long by 44 deep. The centre, with the spire, was erected in 1827-8, by Bishop Chase. The wings were added in 1834-5, under the present Bishop of Ohio, by subscriptions obtained in 1833.



MILNOR HALL;
THE JUNIOR PREPARATORY SCHOOL, OF KENYON COLLEGE.

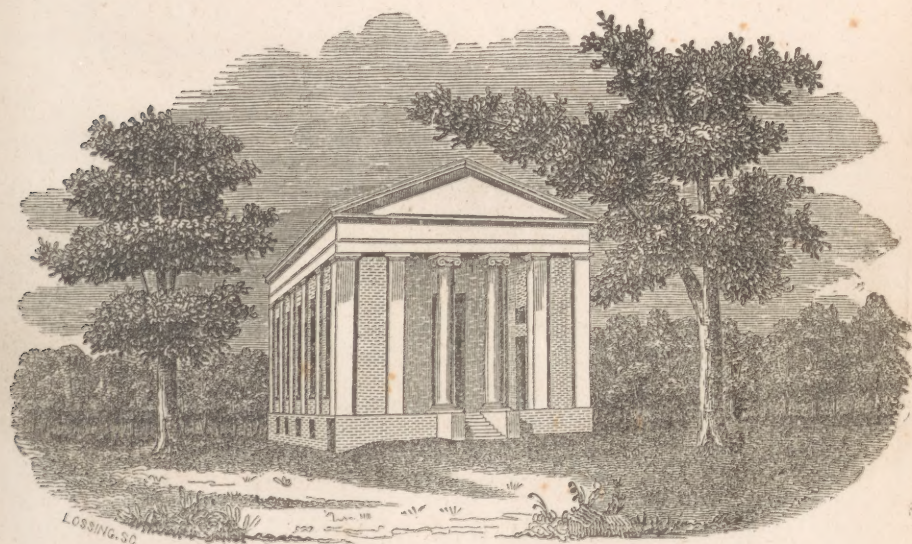
This building is of brick, and was erected by means obtained in 1833, by the present Bishop of Ohio.



BEXLEY HALL;

For the Residence of Students of the Theological Seminary of the Diocese of Ohio.

This building is of brick, 100 feet long by 50 deep. The design was presented by an architect in London, and the means of erecting the building to its present state were given by friends in England, to Bishop M'Ilvaine. The exterior is completed, with the exception of the oriel window in front.



ROSSE CHAPEL.

This is the College-Chapel and the Parish Church. It is of stone. The foundations of a larger edifice were laid by Bishop Chase, and the walls raised to the floor. The length was shortened to the present dimensions, and the present building erected in 1836. With the exception of the basement room, which is the chapel for the daily college prayers, the interior is entirely unfinished, and can be used for worship only in the warm parts of the year.